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SUBJECT: ESTONIA ON COP-15: SKEPTICAL ABOUT CHANCES FOR SUCCESS

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On December 3, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) briefed the diplomatic corps on the upcoming Copenhagen climate conference and the current state of climate negotiations. The presenters confirmed the GOE's priority for the conference is to reach an "ambitious and binding agreement," but also revealed the GOE's skepticism regarding the chances for success in Copenhagen. The presenters' statements also highlighted concerns about a lack of ambition from the U.S. and the effect this will have going forward. END SUMMARY.

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COP-15 POSITIONS UNCHANGED...  
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12. (U) On December 3, the MFA hosted a briefing for the diplomatic community on the upcoming Copenhagen climate conference and the current state of climate negotiations. Short presentations were made by Andre Lipand, from the Energy and Environment Division of the MFA, Keit Parts, of the European Union Department of the MFA, Karin Radiko, Chief Specialist in the Air Quality and Radioactivity Bureau of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), and Kasper Kivisoo, Counselor on Energy and Climate Policy, European Union Secretariat of the State Chancellery. Also in attendance were Allan Gromov, Deputy Secretary General of the MOE, and Mati Murd, Director of the Energy and Environment Division of the MFA.

13. (U) Presenters gave a brief overview of climate change in general terms, the course of negotiations prior to COP-15, the role of the EU and the positions the Government of Estonia (GOE) will support in Copenhagen (see also reftel). Kivisoo summarized GOE's priorities as:

--a binding and ambitious agreement;

--market-based instruments to finance climate change assistance to less developed countries; and,

--a transparent institutional framework to verify countries are honoring their emissions reduction commitments.

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...BUT GOE MORE SKEPTICAL ABOUT SUCCESS  
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¶4. (U) Speakers made clear that the GOE is "always ready to negotiate" but nevertheless left the clear impression that Estonia does not expect COP-15 to result in a binding global agreement. As a fallback (short of an agreement), Estonia supports a firm political commitment with a deadline for completing a strong legally binding agreement. Additionally, the MFA's Keit Parts stated it would take a "miracle" now for the EU to increase their emissions cuts to 30 percent by 2020 (instead of the current plan of 20 percent by 2020) - a goal that seemed possible to reach this summer.

¶5. (U) Estonian experts also expressed concerns about the EU's consolidated negotiating position. Allan Gromov, Deputy Under-Secretary of the MOE and the primary climate change negotiator, noted that the new EU member states trust the leadership of the European Council more than they do the older member-states. This is particularly the case on the financing scheme for assistance to developing countries. The same concern was

echoed during a private discussion with Kivisoo, who stated the old member states push their own agendas, including focusing assistance on their former colonies, which has complicated the EU internal negotiations on climate change.

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THE U.S. AND CHINA: "BIG, SLOW MAMMOTHS"  
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¶6. (U) American leadership on climate change was contrasted (unfavorably) with that of the EU, although there was sympathy for the U.S. position. Radiko acknowledged U.S. negotiators were "in a tough spot" since they had not received political backing from Congress. She relayed concerns, however, that "if the U.S. is not ambitious in Copenhagen, then China will not be either, and this will create a domino effect." Lipand began the briefing by noting humorously that while most Americans thought China was the source of the climate change problem, in fact, it was America. Finally, Kivisoo likened the U.S. and China to "big, slow mammoths" moving at their own pace. He contrasted that with the EU, which he said is moving swiftly and trying to lead other countries in the right direction.

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COMMENT  
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¶7. (SBU) The GOE is sending a large delegation (approximately 21 people) led by the Prime Minister to Copenhagen, but most will be attending for only a day or two. The PM is likely going to demonstrate Estonia's commitment to the process, and thus deflect criticism from Estonia - the EU's largest per capita greenhouse gas emitter. The size of the delegation, in these tough budgetary times, shows the GOE takes its international reputation seriously. However, the GOE's permanent delegation at the conference is being

led by a junior official, showing Estonia has low expectations.  
DECKER